



## THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO **MANAGER'S REPORT**

DATE ISSUED: November 20, 2001 REPORT NO. 01-253

ATTENTION: Natural Resources and Culture Committee  
Agenda of November 28, 2001

SUBJECT: City-Wide Design Standards for Comfort Stations

### SUMMARY:

Issue - The use of pre-designed comfort stations as a City-Wide Standard for Comfort Stations?

Manager's Recommendation - Approve the continued use of pre-designed comfort stations on an alternative basis depending on project needs.

Other Recommendations - None.

Fiscal Impact - None

### BACKGROUND

On June 13, 2001, Councilmember Scott Peters requested Councilmember Byron Wear, Chair of the Land Use and Housing Committee, to have a hearing to determine if it would be possible for the Park and Recreation and the Engineering and Capital Projects Departments to design two or three acceptable comfort stations with acceptable fixtures that various communities could then select (Attachment 1). The goal is to streamline the public input process which currently takes several months and a portion of the projects' funds. This request was subsequently referred to the Natural Resources and Culture Committee.

### DISCUSSION

Historically the Park and Recreation and the Engineering and Capital Projects Departments have solicited community input in the design of comfort stations in an effort to assure that all of the community needs are addressed. This process is sequential and generally begins with presenting a conceptual design to a Recreation Council and progresses through an Area Committee, a

Community Planning Group/Town Council, the Subcommittee for the Removal of Architectural Barriers, the Design Review Committee, and the Park and Recreation Board. In addition, for projects along the coast line, the process often includes a Coastal Commission Hearing. Any of these committees may approve the project as presented, approve it with changes, or may request to make changes and request a second presentation prior to approval and moving to the next committee. These committees are of an advisory nature, with the exception of the Coastal Commission.



**Figure 2** Comfort station/shower facility at Fanuel St.

The current process makes use of architectural consultants to propose a conceptual design of the comfort stations. The architects study the proposed location, the neighborhood characteristics and the surroundings, and predetermine possible impacts of the new building. Based on their professional expertise and findings they design a conceptual plan which harmonizes with the neighborhood and other park amenities. The internal components are designed to be vandalism resistant and to reduce the maintenance requirements. These may include new and improved products in the market. The architect's conceptual plan is also coordinated with any art component that may become part of the building.



**Figure 3** Balboa Park Comfort Station by the Organ Pavilion

The current public input may suggest changes to the proposed conceptual plan on all aspects. Many of the suggestions are included in the design. The ones that are not, in most instances, are addressed to the satisfaction of the committees, as demonstrated by their vote in favor of the project. In addition to the public input, the Design Review Committee, which is composed of a number of citywide architects, provide input on the proposed architectural features of the project including color, texture, materials, components, location, landscaping, etc.



Although the goal of this process is to address the concerns of the communities, individual and group interests may delay the process and increase expenses by their unwillingness to reach consensus. Since the committees are advisory in nature, in those cases where a consensus is not reached, the project may move forward with a negative vote from that group. However, the subsequent committees do not look favorably to such action.



**Figure 4** Pre-designed comfort station at Otay Lake

The idea of using pre-designed comfort stations is not new to the Park & Recreation and the Engineering and Capital Projects Departments. There are a number of companies who offer this service. The City has used pre-designed comfort stations successfully in previous occasions, where community input was minimally required, for example at the San Vicente and Otay Lakes. However, when this process has been proposed to some communities, it has been unsuccessful. Different communities have different needs. Comfort station requirements are varied. Some require only two stalls for each sex while other require up to ten. Some require use of family style restrooms, or storage space of different sizes for little leagues, concession stands, dressing rooms, showers/rinse off stations, lower roof lines, etc., or any combination of these. Two or three pre-design comfort stations would not cover the whole range of requirements for these buildings. In addition, based on past experience, in order for this process to work, the community input process would have to be limited considerably. Some cost and time savings would be realized by this limitation.



**Figure 5** Large pre-designed restroom/shower facility

The process to construct a pre-designed comfort station is not much different than that of a newly designed comfort station. Site improvements such as grading, infrastructure, landscaping and accessibility have to be designed and constructed the same. The construction of the building and the permits are the same. There is some time and money savings in the design of the building only.

Attachment 2 shows an estimated range of total project costs for the new design, the pre-designed alternatives, and some of the benefits of the two methods.

The use of pre-designed comfort stations is a viable option for projects where impact to the community is minimal. However, there will be projects with requirements which will not be met by a set of pre-designed comfort stations, unless the community input process is significantly altered. For these projects the current process, or a modified one should it be changed, would be the best solution. The use of a pre-design comfort station should be determined on a case by case basis at the planning stage of the project.



**Figure 6** Pre-designed restroom built with materials kit

ALTERNATIVE(S)

1. Continue using the current community input process for all comfort station designs.
2. Use pre-designed comfort stations for all projects .

Respectfully submitted,

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CONCURRENCE:

APPROVED:

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Frank Belock  
Director, Engineering & Capital Projects

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George I. Loveland  
Senior Deputy City Manager

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Note: Attachment 1 is not available in electronic format. A copy is available for review in the Office of the City Clerk.

Attachments: 1. Memo dated June 13, 2001, City Wide Comfort Station Design  
2. Tables



## Attachment 2

The following table shows an estimated range of total project costs for the new design and the pre-designed alternatives.

Size	New design	Pre-design
500 Sq. Ft.	\$150,000	\$150,000
1,000 Sq. Ft.	\$300,000	\$256,000 to \$285,000
1,500 Sq. Ft.	\$450,000	\$385,000 to \$430,000

The following table shows some of the benefits of the two methods:

	New design	Pre-design
Community input	yes	limited
Designed in harmony with surrounding	yes	no
Coordination with art elements	yes	limited
Size flexibility	yes	no
Allows use of new products	yes	limited
Allows use of different materials and finishes	yes	limited
Cost savings	no	yes
Time savings	no	yes